

## Book Reviews

### **With Pegasus in India: The Story of 153 Gurkha Parachute Battalion**

Eric F G Neild 110 pp \$27.50 ISBN 089839-150-4  
Nashville, Tennessee: The Battery Press, 1991

'With Pegasus in India, the story of 153 Gurkha Parachute Battalion' is proudly embossed with the sign of the Indian Airborne Division, (Pegasus carrying Bellerophon to War). This book appears on the Golden Jubilee of the creation of Airborne Divisions. It gives an easily read account of the life of a Regimental Medical Officer with one of the crack Gurkha regiments training for war with the 14th Army in Burma - the forgotten army. It gives a vivid account of the thrills, problems and hardship of parachute training overseas in the time of war. Life as a Regimental Medical Officer with its inevitable periods of hard training, good living, boredom, panic and rush, so well known to all who served in the services, finally culminating in battle. We are given a very modest account of the close medical support that the RMO gives to his troops and of the profound effect he has on their morale. Interwoven with the story is the development of Indian Airborne forces, which culminated in an operational parachute descent at Elephant Point in the recapture of Rangoon - the end of the war in the Far East.

The account takes us from Delhi to Rawalpindi, Lahore, Amritsa to the seige of Imphal, all well supported by some of the best maps I have seen, including an excellent relief map of the area from the river Brahmaputra to Imphal to Sangshak showing the incredible country over which the regiments had to move on foot.

Indian Airborne forces secured their place in history and established a formidable reputation. This book will help ensure that the memory of this division will live and those who played such an active role are not forgotten. It is fitting that this is published in the year of the war in the Gulf and reminds us of the problems that the soldier/doctor in battle has to face. It is strongly recommended as a good exciting read.

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### **The History of the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital Margate 1791-1991**

F G St Clair Strange 216 pp £12.95  
ISBN 0-948193 573

Gillingham, Kent: Meresborough Books, 1991

The Royal Sea Bathing Hospital, Margate, which claims to be the oldest orthopaedic hospital in the

world, celebrates its bicentenary this year. It was founded in 1791 by Dr John Coakley Lettsom, the Quaker physician, remembered also as the founder of the Medical Society of London in 1773. Wealthy and successful in his London medical practice, he nevertheless had a well developed social conscience and was concerned about the welfare of poor, deprived children suffering from scrofula - a term originally applied to tuberculous disease of the lymphatic glands but later extended to include other forms of tuberculosis affecting the abdomen, bones and joints.

Thalasso-therapy ('the sea water cure') for scrofula was first introduced in the mid-18th century by Dr Richard Russell of Brighton, which later developed into a fashionable seaside resort, favoured by the Court and the rich. It was Lettsom's idea to provide a similar centre for the treatment of the less privileged and so the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital, Margate came into existence and opened its doors in 1796. Initially, the hospital functioned only during the summer months but later it remained open throughout the year. The scrofulous children from London's East End appeared to benefit from Margate's fresh air, good food and the local effect on their skin lesions of immersion in sea water.

For the first hundred years, the hospital devoted itself to the cure of tuberculosis but, during the 20th century, it developed into a general orthopaedic and surgical tuberculosis hospital. Fortunately, tuberculosis cases are rare at the present time and a large variety of medical and surgical cases are now admitted.

Research into the hospital archives has unearthed some interesting material. The noted dermatologist, Sir Erasmus Wilson PRCS, lived in nearby Westgate and made a handsome donation to the hospital enabling the building of a new wing and a beautiful chapel. He is commemorated by a splendid statue in the hospital grounds. Among the famous patients treated, one is surprised to find Karl Marx who in 1866 spent a month there convalescing following an attack of 'boils'. Some of the hospital's proudest possessions are the dolls used by the splint maker, Frederick Christian, to demonstrate splints and plaster casts. One of these dolls adorns the front cover of the book.

For the author, an orthopaedic surgeon long associated with the hospital, the writing of this book on the occasion of the bicentenary was obviously a labour of love. He has provided an interesting, well illustrated account of a unique hospital whose future is now sadly threatened.

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